

VZCZCXRO1768
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHMA #0736/01 1721145
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 211145Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8779
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1419

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MONROVIA 000736

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STATE FOR PRM, AF/W, DRL
USAID FOR AFR/WA-SSWIFT

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: USG-FUNDED PROGRAMS RAISE AWARENESS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
AND ABUSE IN LIBERIA

REF: A) STATE 112531 (B) 06 MONROVIA 302
(C) 06 MONROVIA 627 (D) 06 MONROVIA 651

SUMMARY

¶1. UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT (USG)-FUNDED PROGRAMS IN LIBERIA HAVE STRENGTHENED COORDINATION, RAISED AWARENESS, AND PROVIDED STANDARDIZED INVESTIGATIVE AND REPORTING TOOLS TO THE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE COMMUNITY IN AN EFFORT TO COMBAT SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (SEA) IN LIBERIA.

¶2. USAID'S OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA) FUNDING SUPPORTS A UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM (UNCT) SEA COORDINATOR. IN ADDITION, USAID/OFDA AND THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT'S BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES AND MIGRATION (PRM) CO-FUND A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION (NGO) SEA COORDINATION UNIT AND RESOURCE CENTER. APPROXIMATELY 900 U.N. STAFF AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM 59 U.N. IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS HAVE RECEIVED SEA AWARENESS TRAINING OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS. SEA AWARENESS AND INVESTIGATIVE AND REPORTING TRAINING SESSIONS CONTINUE FOR FOCAL POINTS FROM INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL NGOS, AS WELL AS GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA (GOL) MINISTRIES. MEMBERS OF THE COUNTRY-WIDE PROTECTION CORE GROUPS (PCG), CHAIRED BY THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, CONTINUE TO RECEIVE SEA AWARENESS TRAININGS. SEA SUB-CLUSTER GROUPS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED UNDER THE PCGS WITH CLEAR TERMS OF REFERENCE. PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS ARE ONGOING AND COORDINATED THROUGH THE INTERAGENCY GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) TASKFORCE CHAIRED BY THE MINISTRY OF GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT.

¶3. WHILE ATTITUDE CHANGE IS DIFFICULT TO QUANTIFY AND QUALIFY, IT IS CLEARLY EVIDENT THAT THESE USG-FUNDED PROGRAMS HAVE FOCUSED A BRIGHTER AND MORE SWEEPING SPOTLIGHT ON THE ISSUE OF SEA AMONG THE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE COMMUNITY, THE GOL, AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE.
END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

¶4. ALLEGATIONS OF SEA SURFACED DURING A JOINT SAVE THE CHILDREN/UK (SC/UK) AND OFFICE OF THE U.N. HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR) ASSESSMENT MISSION TO LIBERIA, SIERRA LEONE, AND GUINEA IN 2002. THE TEAM RECEIVED NUMEROUS REPORTS OF SEA IMPLICATING HUMANITARIAN WORKERS, INCLUDING LOCAL STAFF. AS A RESULT, THE U.N. INTERAGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE (IASC) AND THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS MOVEMENT ESTABLISHED A TASK FORCE ON "PROTECTION FROM SEA IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES" AND FORMULATED A PLAN OF ACTION TO RESPOND TO THE ISSUE. USG EFFORTS TO COMBAT SEA INCLUDED THE REQUIREMENT THAT IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS ADOPT A STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT CONSISTENT WITH THE IASC PRINCIPLES. USAID/OFDA PROVIDES FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO THE AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY INTERNATIONAL ACTION (INTERACTION), WHICH ESTABLISHED A PROTECTION WORKING GROUP TO FOCUS

ON A VARIETY OF PROTECTION ISSUES INCLUDING SEA.

15. DESPITE CONCERTED EFFORTS BY DONORS AND THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY, AN SC/UK REPORT IN LATE 2005 AGAIN FOUND, BASED ON FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS RATHER THAN ACTUAL REPORTED CASES, THAT CHILDREN STILL WERE HAVING SEX WITH ADULTS PERCEIVED TO HAVE WEALTH OR STATUS; AGAIN INCLUDING RELIEF WORKERS, PEACEKEEPERS, COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND TEACHERS. USAID/OFDA RESPONDED BY PROVIDING SUPPORT TO THE BUILDING SAFER ORGANIZATIONS (BSO) PROJECT, CO-MANAGED BY INTERACTION AND THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES (ICVA). THE BSO PROJECT, THROUGH REGIONAL FIELD BASED TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS, HELPED BUILD THE CAPACITY OF NGOS TO RESPOND TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE BY PROVIDING ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE TOOLS TO IMPLEMENT SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE REPORTING SYSTEMS AND TO CARRY OUT HIGH-QUALITY, LEGALLY SUSTAINABLE INVESTIGATIONS.

RECENT USG ACTIONS TO COMBAT SEA IN LIBERIA

--UNCT SEA COORDINATOR--

16. IN FY 2007, USAID/OFDA JOINED THE UNCT IN CO-FUNDING A FULL-TIME SEA COORDINATOR, WHICH WAS A PRIORITY FOR THE IN-COUNTRY NETWORK (ICN) CHAIRED BY THE DEPUTY SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL (DSRSG). DEVELOPED BY THE U.N., THE ICN ACTS AS THE PRIMARY BODY FOR THE COORDINATION AND OVERSIGHT ON PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO SEA BY PERSONNEL WORKING FOR THE U.N., ITS PARTNERS, INTERNATIONAL NGOS, AND OTHER HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE WORKERS.

17. SINCE THE UNCT COORDINATOR'S ARRIVAL IN JUNE 2006, 898 U.N. STAFF AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM 59 U.N. IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS HAVE RECEIVED SEA AWARENESS TRAINING. ALL U.N. AGENCIES IN THE FIELD AND IN MONROVIA HAVE SEA FOCAL POINTS AND MEET ON A MONTHLY BASIS.

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18. THREE-DAY PCG FOCAL POINT TRAININGS RECENTLY CONCLUDED IN MONROVIA AND BONG COUNTIES, WHILE SIMILAR TRAININGS ARE BEING ROLLED OUT TO THE OTHER COUNTIES. (NOTE: CORE PROTECTION GROUPS, WITH UNHCR AS SECRETARIAT, ARE THE UMBRELLAS FOR COORDINATION AND RESPONSE ON PROTECTION ISSUES. END NOTE). THIRTY-THREE PARTICIPANTS ATTENDED THE MONROVIA TRAINING WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL NGOS, U.N. AGENCIES, AND GOVERNMENT BODIES SUCH AS THE LIBERIAN REFUGEE REPATRIATION RESETTLEMENT COMMITTEE (LRRRC), MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, AND MINISTRY OF GENDER. ALL THE NGOS WERE REPRESENTED BY LOCAL STAFF THUS HELPING SUSTAINABILITY AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE LIBERIAN HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY.

19. PCGS AT THE NATIONAL AND COUNTY LEVEL NOW HAVE SEA SUB-CLUSTERS WITH CLEAR TERMS OF REFERENCE DEVELOPED BY THE UNCT SEA COORDINATOR, ENABLING ORGANIZATIONS TO EFFECTIVELY BUILD CAPACITY, SHARE INFORMATION, AND COORDINATE SEA ACTIVITIES.

110. THE UNCT SEA COORDINATOR, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE NATIONAL GBV TASKFORCE, USED THE "DAY OF THE AFRICA CHILD" ON JUNE 15 AS A PLATFORM FOR COUNTRYWIDE AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS FOCUSED ON THE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO SEA WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON ACTIVITIES IN THE SOUTHEASTERN COUNTIES WHERE AN AWARENESS GAP HAS BEEN NOTED. THE FIRST SUCH CAMPAIGN WAS LAUNCHED ON DECEMBER 4, 2006, BY PRESIDENT ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF AND THE SUBSEQUENT ROLL-OUT HAS BEEN PRIORITIZED BY THE NATIONAL GBV TASKFORCE CHAIRED BY THE MINISTRY OF GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT. THE UNCT COORDINATOR INTENDS TO FORM INTERAGENCY MONITORING TEAMS THAT WILL UNDERTAKE FIELD VISITS IN NOVEMBER TO ASSESS THE CAMPAIGNS' IMPACT.

--NGO SEA COORDINATING UNIT--

111. USAID/OFDA AND STATE/BPRM ARE CO-FUNDING A SEA PROTECTION INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE (IRC), IN COLLABORATION WITH SC/UK, AMERICAN REFUGEE COMMITTEE (ARC), AND CHRISTIAN CHILDREN'S FUND (CCF). THROUGH THIS PROJECT, ENTITLED "COMBATING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN LIBERIA" (CISEAL), IRC HAS ESTABLISHED A SEA COORDINATION UNIT AND RESOURCE CENTER PROVIDING TECHNICAL SUPPORT, EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL, AND TRAINING TO A NETWORK OF INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL NGOS AND THE GOL IN AN EFFORT TO

PROMOTE COMMON DEFINITIONS, DEVELOPMENT OF CODES OF CONDUCT, PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES, INCLUDING MUTUALLY ACCEPTED MECHANISMS FOR THE INVESTIGATION, REPORTING, AND REFERRAL OF SEA VIOLATIONS. THE PROJECT ALSO HELPS FACILITATE LIAISON, COORDINATION, AND COLLABORATION WITH THE U.N. AND ITS AGENCIES.

¶12. CISEAL FACILITATORS HAVE RECENTLY CONDUCTED TRAINING SESSIONS ON PROPER AND LEGALLY ACCEPTABLE PROCEDURES FOR THE INVESTIGATION AND REPORTING OF SEA VIOLATIONS FOR 16 LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL NGOS, AS WELL AS SEA AWARENESS TRAINING FOR SENIOR MANAGEMENT STAFF FROM 20 INTERNATIONAL NGOS. CISEAL HAS PROMOTED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FOCAL POINTS IN ALL HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS AND PROVIDED FOCAL POINT TRAINING TO OVER 20 INTERNATIONAL NGOS, 30 LOCAL NGOS, AND GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES INCLUDING THE MINISTRIES OF AGRICULTURE, PUBLIC WORKS, INTERNAL AFFAIRS, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, COMMERCE, INDUSTRY, TRANSPORT, JUSTICE, EDUCATION, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, FINANCE, LABOR, HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE, AND GENDER. CISEAL HAS FURTHER PROMOTED FOCAL POINTS AND CONDUCTED TRAINING FOR STAFF FROM THE LRRRC, ROBERTS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, AND THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION.

¶13. IN ADDITION TO THE TWO USG-FUNDED PROGRAMS, THE CONFLICT AND DISCIPLINE UNIT (CDU) WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN LIBERIA (UNMIL) HAS CONDUCTED SEA AWARENESS TRAINING TO 5265 UNMIL STAFF SINCE 2006.

CONCLUSION

¶14. USG-FUNDED SEA AWARENESS AND MITIGATION PROGRAMS CONTINUE TO GALVANIZE STAFF OF THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY AND GOL TO NOT ONLY BE AWARE OF SEA, BUT ALSO UNDERTAKE A COMMON APPROACH TO ENSURE THAT EMPLOYEES UNDERSTAND THAT "ZERO TOLERANCE" IS THE RULE OF THE DAY AND THAT SEA VIOLATIONS WILL BE INVESTIGATED, REPORTED, AND ACTED UPON IN A CONSISTENT, LEGAL, AND COORDINATED APPROACH. WHILE THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS HAS YET TO BE QUANTIFIED OR QUALIFIED, ONE CAN SAFELY DEDUCE THAT THAT THE GENERAL PUBLIC IS INCREASINGLY AWARE OF SEA ISSUES AND ITS ACCOMPANYING RESPONSIBILITIES TO BUILD SAFER COMMUNITIES FOR ALL ITS MEMBERS.

BOOTH